

Workplace Violence

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Commute in well-traveled and well-lighted routes and conveyances. Travel with others whenever possible. Avoid dark streets and nearly-empty buses or subway cars.
- Be alert. Whether you are walking, driving or riding on public transit, watch the people around you. Have escape routes in mind if you are confronted.
- If you think you are being followed, change direction. If you don't lose the person, go to a crowded well-lighted place and call the police.
- Avoid dark and isolated parking areas. Look around before you step out of your vehicle. As you approach your vehicle, look around it, under it and in the back seat before you open the door.
- Trust your own instincts. If a customer, co-worker or fellow commuter gives you the creeps, get away.
- Avoid entering an elevator with just one other person, particularly if the person makes you uncomfortable. If you are riding an elevator and feel uneasy about other occupants, get off at the next floor.
- Also be aware of other people in stores, banks, restaurants and other public places. Never enter a convenience store or other such building if you suspect a robbery is in progress. Call the police from another location.
- Do not enter your office or any other building if it looks like there has been a break-in. Instead, go to a telephone somewhere else and call the police. Be alert. Whether you are walking, driving or riding on public transit, watch the people around you. Have escape routes in mind if you are confronted.

3 key strategies

- In your workplace, question the presence of strangers and former employees. If you see someone who shouldn't be there, tell your supervisor or security personnel.
- Follow your company's security procedures concerning lock-up, setting alarms, handling cash, confidentiality and other matters. These are not just for the protection of company property, they are also for your safety.
- Take advantage of any security and self-defense training provided by your company, employee organization or community group. It will make you more aware of potential dangers and give you tools to deal with them.

FACT or FICTION?

FICTION: Workplace violence is never predictable.

FACT: There are ways to identify the risk of violence. Most violent incidents take place at night or in the early morning hours. Many victims are working alone or in small groups. If you are guarding property or working in high-crime areas, you are at risk. Workplace violence is not always between co-workers, nor does someone a worker knows always commit it. A former employee, the spouse of an employee, or a stranger can commit it.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can use your people skills to help prevent violence. How?

- Avoid confrontation. Learn to handle stress and disagreements in a reasonable manner. Heated arguments can sometimes escalate into physical violence. Stay out of other people's fights.
- Treat others fairly. Fired employees who assault former supervisors and co-workers typically carry grudges about real and imagined insults and injustices.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Workplace violence has a broad definition that includes aggressive acts such as intimidation, harassment, verbal and/or physical assault and murder.

INTIMIDATION

Intimidation ranges from threatening body language to threatening letters. Someone blocking your path can also be intimidating.

HARASSMENT

Most people tell jokes about their friends and give them unflattering nicknames, but this is not considered harassment until that person says "no" and it continues anyway. Unwanted calls from a co-worker that don't stop, or being continually called into the office for no acceptable reason may be considered patterns of harassment.

VERBAL ASSAULT

Yelling, screaming and name calling are just three examples of verbal assault. It also includes threats to you or your property.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT

We all know what physical assault is. Or do we? As well as direct physical harm done to you, it can also include someone tossing you materials that are too heavy to catch.

HOMICIDE

Homicide is another name for murder.

